

Keynote Speech

## **Marine and Coastal Environmental Awareness Building within the context of UNESCO's Activities in Asia and the Pacific**

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UNESCO is one of the specialized agencies under the United Nations charged with the advancement and improvement of education, social and natural sciences, culture and communication. This global mandate translates into focused programmes in the field tailored to the member states' specific requirements that build on the full breadth of expertise available in UNESCO.

Environmental awareness building is an integral component of many of UNESCO's programmes. This paper describes how UNESCO addresses the need for awareness building in a variety of settings under different programmes and sectors.

A first example is taken from the work of the education sector, which aims at introducing innovative learning methods and curricula that improve a young generation's perspective on sustainable development.

The second example is taken from the Man and Biosphere Programme. The Biosphere Reserve concept has had a long history within UNESCO and is increasingly applied to protected areas in the coastal zone. Notable examples are Ranong Biosphere Reserve in Thailand, Can Gio Biosphere Reserve in Vietnam and Puerto Galera in the Philippines. The concept is currently experiencing a revival as more and more countries realize the importance of striking a balance between human development and strict conservation.

Many people know about UNESCO through the so-called World Heritage Sites. These are sites that are recognized by the world community as particular monuments, either natural or cultural, that warrant preservation for the whole of mankind. In the Asia-Pacific region, there are quite a number of coastal and marine sites that have been designated as natural world heritage sites, e.g. Halong Bay in Vietnam, the Komodo marine national park, Indonesia, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, East-Rennel Island in the Solomon Islands, and Tubbataha Reef in the Philippines.

The need for a cross-sectoral approach is evident under the so-called Coastal Zone and Small Islands endeavour, which aims at assisting Member States towards environmentally-sound, socially-equitable and culturally-appropriate development in coastal regions and in small islands. Three examples of current pilot projects (Surin Island -Thailand, Jakarta Bay - Indonesia, and Ulugan Bay, the Philippines) are highlighted.

One thing what these projects tell us is the recognition that there is no common approach to awareness building. Each setting and each audience requires a different strategy. UNESCO's strength is to learn from all these experiences and make such new insights universally available and to put novel concepts into practice.